Opening statement by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

22 October 2013

The following statement will be delivered by the Council at the opening of the Hearing in response to the Inspector’s request.

“Good Morning.

On behalf of Rotherham Borough Council I would like to welcome all participants to this independent examination into Rotherham’s Core Strategy.

My name is Andy Duncan and I am the Planning Policy Manager at the Council.

Thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to present a brief opening statement in order to set the context for the examination hearing sessions.

Our work on the Core Strategy began in 2005. Over the following years there have been numerous stages of
consultation leading to the Publication Core Strategy 2012 and Focused Changes to that document in 2013.

The Core Strategy has been informed by these consultations and continued dialogue with stakeholders, local amenity groups, statutory consultees and the community. We would like to thank all those who have engaged with us over the years.

Rotherham covers an area of nearly 300 square kilometres. It is one of four metropolitan areas within South Yorkshire, and is part of the Sheffield City Region.

Rotherham developed from a small market town into a major industrial centre based on coal and steel. The population is now in excess of a quarter of a million and more than half of the borough is rural, characterised by attractive villages and rolling countryside.

Despite significant improvements seen over recent years many of the issues, problems and challenges facing Rotherham stem from the legacy of its industrial past.

Fresh challenges will also have to be faced in relation to the impact of an increasing and ageing population,
better use of resources and the likely impact on the
local environment of climate change.

The key challenges and opportunities identified in the
Core Strategy relate to:

• Meeting housing needs
• Addressing deprivation
• The movement of people within the borough and beyond
• Improving the economy, education and skills
• The renaissance of Rotherham town centre
• Addressing climate change and public health

To address these challenges and opportunities our Core
Strategy sets out a borough wide strategic vision, objectives and policies for the period 2013 - 2028.

We want Rotherham to provide a high quality of life and aspire to minimise inequalities. The Core Strategy seeks to conserve and enhance natural and historic assets, and deliver safe, clean, green and well maintained neighbourhoods, with good quality homes and accessible local facilities. Regeneration of Rotherham town centre will enable it to retain its role as the borough’s main service centre.
The role of settlements and the distribution of growth within Rotherham have their roots in the strategic approach set out in the now revoked Regional Spatial Strategy, and in the robust evidence base supporting Core Strategy preparation which has further considered the suitability of settlements to accommodate change.

Our strategy seeks to focus the largest proportion of growth in the Rotherham Urban Area. Significant development will also take place around Wath, Brampton and West Melton, on the fringe of Rotherham Urban Area at Wickersley, Bramley and Ravenfield, and in the south-east at Dinnington, Anston and Laughton Common.

A key plank of the Core Strategy is the delivery of a new community at Bassingthorpe Farm, which is crucial to delivering growth in the heart of Rotherham’s urban area; and the Council is working in partnership with the landowners, with support from the Homes & Community Agency, to help achieve this.

The Core Strategy has also had regard to Rotherham’s role within the Sheffield City Region. We want Rotherham to be prosperous with a vibrant, diverse, innovative and enterprising economy; recognising the close economic, commercial and housing market links with Sheffield and
our other neighbouring authorities. The Council is satisfied that the growth and distribution set out in the document, along with the strategic policies, will ensure that the borough contributes appropriately to meeting its own needs and those of the wider City Region; fulfilling its role as a key partner in the City Region.

The Core Strategy is supported by a robust Infrastructure Delivery Plan, which identifies the infrastructure necessary to support the delivery of our growth requirements, and a whole Plan Viability Assessment. We believe that in preparing the Core Strategy, the Council has had due regard to flexibility, in order to ensure that when market conditions do improve, the plan will be able to effectively respond to changing circumstances.

The Core Strategy has been prepared amidst a rapidly changing landscape, which has seen the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework, the Localism Act, the Duty to Co-operate, the revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy and the emerging importance of the City Region.

At all stages of preparation the Council has sought to ensure that the Core Strategy meets relevant requirements. The Core Strategy has also been prepared
having regard to the presumption in favour of sustainable development. As such the Council considers the Core Strategy to be sound, legally compliant, and compliant with the Framework.

To conclude, it is our view that the Core Strategy addresses the key planning issues in Rotherham and sets out a clear vision for the future development of the Borough.

It has been formulated through meaningful engagement and is considered to provide a positive basis for decision making to help take Rotherham forward in the interests of our residents, visitors, businesses and investors.

We welcome the independent examination of the document, and look forward to actively engaging in positive discussion with the Inspector and participants throughout the hearing sessions.

Thank you, Sir.